

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE NEGRO  
WELFARE LEAGUE OF NEW JERSEY FOR ITS YEAR'S WORK

To me it is a duty and a great pleasure to pay tribute to the persons and organizations that have been responsible for the Negro Welfare League's organization and our contributors who have maintained it to the present time.

I cannot refrain from calling the names of our president, Mr. Mackay, our treasurer, Mr. MacDougall, our Secretary of the Executive Committee, Miss Hamilton, our chairman, Dr. Lyak, and former chairman, Rev. Stubblebine, and also Mrs. Gregory, Mrs. Robinson, Mr. Stewart, Mr. Alexander, Mr. Cannon, Mr. Vandercell, Mr. C. M. Brown, Rev. Spearman and Mr. Faust, and also Prof. J. K. Valentine, of Bordentown Industrial School.

These persons I have often called upon in their very busy hours since my coming here and have been assured always of a prompt response.

I wish to thank too, our group of Friendly Visitors. It is my belief that a more unselfish, self forgetful group of women cannot be found anywhere. No day this very severe winter has been too bad for them to give their time, at no time have they feared to expose themselves if they saw their opportunity to do a deed worthy of effort. I cannot say too much in praise of Mrs. Gregory, Chairman and Mrs. Douglas, Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Green, Mrs. Scott, Mrs. Holmes, Mrs. Monroe, Mrs. Little, Mrs. Patton, Mrs. Richardson, Mrs. Moran, Mrs. Oliver, and Mrs. Street, and Miss Eva and Mae Mulford, who have assisted her.

Similar praise is to be given to our Big Brothers, especially Mr. Reavis the Chairman.

Gratitude must be expressed also, to the Newark News, and the New Jersey Observer, which publications have given us much space.

Finally we are thankful to the Ministers, whose pulpits we have used for getting our cause before the people. To the Children's Aid Society, for granting us the use of one of their rooms and especially to Bordentown Industrial School, which has done the printing.

This report will probably not be spectacular so far as accomplishment of work is concerned. Because of war times and an extremely hard winter, it has been very difficult to deal with large crowds. Coal shortage and cold weather made organization of the either for our young people or older ones almost impossible. Many of our achievements then have come largely thru dealing with individuals and in social work it is often very difficult to point successes with individuals. Co-operation between races and cooperation is one of the principal things for which the Negro Welfare League stands and if it has done nothing else than bring about a more wholesome feeling and understanding between the white and colored people, of this community, I should regard it as a social

estment well worth while.

It has proven clearly that human being himself is a bigger thing than the mere white human or colored human. It has brought out too a greater racial unity and spirit of co-operation and unification among the colored people themselves.

The Organizations in Roselle, Elizabeth, Cranford and West-  
field, and Jersey City show this.

But aside from these two things namely: a more friendly understanding between white and colored people and a greater unity among colored people themselves, there have been other things done.

First:- Investigation.

This was necessary, on coming here in September, in order to get the problems which were most serious and how they could be dealt with. An investigation was made of the housing conditions of the Negroes in Newark. The results of this were published in papers, pictures appearing with them. This investigation showed that we were of all persons the worse of housed groups; that we paid a far greater rent for our accommodations than any other group of people in the city. For this publicity we are particularly grateful to the Newark News. This publicity awakened a more kindly feeling towards the Negroes of the City and greater willingness to help them.

Second:- Investigations were made of ten Negro families in order to get an idea of the earning power of the Negro family here. The result of this investigation showed clearly that it is opportunity and not alma that we want.

Programs were made of the particular sections in which colored people live in Newark. This was done very thoroughly showing the slums, businesses and other activities into which we enter. Copies were sent to the State Tenement House Department and Newark had large prints of the same made. Our volunteers made a special investigation of a district in which Negroes live in the State Tenement House Department.

Third:- In trying to better the housing conditions of our people here we have been up against an almost insurmountable wall.

About 15 families altogether have secured better places thru efforts of the League. Our most successful results in this have been (1) Securing a place in Nutley for a family. This was instrumental in getting three other families to go out there. (2) Secondly we induced a colored business woman to take a house and open it for lodgings. Third, we keep a list of houses for people own lodge and do light housekeeping. More than a hundred secured rooms from this list. The Submarine Corporation Co. has called us on one occasion and asked us to get rooms for 50 men. We sent this list of houses also to the Synthetic Ray Works and the Federal Shipyards.

Again:- The Housing Committee of the League drafted a set of resolutions one of which was sent to every member of the Board of the Housing Committee which resolution petitioned each member of the Board of Trade Committee to remember the colored people in their

building plans. Several members of the Committee replied that we could be assured of their interest when anything definite happened.

Employment:- Our organization came into being at a time when the need for Negro Labor was in great demand. Though limited in our staff of workers, we have been able since November to place directly or thru other sources, 233 men and women in jobs.

We have placed a social worker, a clerk, a riveter, a carpenter, and millwright, an electrician, and a driller. Many people have been given days work. General house work and places in large industrial plants. Several factories have taken in colored women because of personal visits made to the Superintendent by the Executive Secretary.

Our program in Employment also included personal talks to large groups of men in industrial plants where colored men were employed in large numbers. The object of these talks were primarily to make these men conscious of their duty to their employers in this, our great industrial opportunity. (2) Conscience of their duty to their country in these war times, and incidentally to tell them of the work which the Negro Welfare League proposed to do.

Because of our lack of an adequate force to carry on our work we feel that we have been very seriously handicapped in carrying out our employment program. Calls for hundreds of persons have come to us from out of town and in town but because of the situation of our office and our lack of an adequate force we could not give the time to supply them. This is a regret for by being able to furnish labor either in domestic service or in larger fields of industry, we accomplish a two-fold result. (1) By supplying a need and (2) by giving a person out of work a job, thereby making him self-supporting and relieving him of worry in the Community of an idler.

Personally, I feel that the sooner we are able to carry out our employment program on a larger scale the faster our organization will grow and the more quickly will the community be able to see the value of the services it is rendering.

This need is especially acute for women and it is felt also for men for while there is plenty of opportunity for Negro laborers, there is no agency at work which makes any special effort in placing skilled laborers or persons who would not be in the ordinary laborers class, such as our high school graduates and skilled mechanics.

One sees clearly how great this need is when we get calls for persons who are willing to pay \$30 - \$35 a month for women houseworkers. We feel that we could get the workers if we had time and place to give to it.

### RECREATION

One of the most pressing needs of the colored people of

the Community was a place non-sectarian where they could gather in large numbers and entertain themselves decently under proper supervision. Realizing this need, we wrote the Board of Education asking them for the use of one of the schools for a social center in a section in which there were many of our people. They very readily responded to this and gave us the use of the Belmont Avenue School.

This School is opened every Friday evening from 7:30 to 10:30. Here games are played, the gymnasium is open for sports and good music with properly supervised dancing is carried on. This is a great benefit to our young people especially those who would otherwise have no place to go.

The Female Charities Society has granted us the use of one of these rooms for club purposes for our boys. Troop 55 Boy Scouts of America which has a very large membership composed of colored boys from all over the city meet in this building Friday evenings under competent scout master.

Again, St. James's Red Cross Chapter, composed of 117 colored women who are giving their time and energy in interest of our boys here and over there was given a meeting place thru the efforts of the League.

#### Health.

Coming from a rural into an urban Community unfavorable health conditions would naturally result. It was one of our aims to reduce the enormous death rate which occurred in 1916-17. In trying to do this we helped to secure the appointment of a colored nurse on the Board of Health. This nurse has been not alone a helper, but also a competent social worker.

In co-operating with the Board of Health, we distributed several thousand pieces of literature, the executive secretary and the head of the Department of Health writing the health hints which were distributed.

We have reported more than 100 cases of improper housing conditions to the Department of Health and the State Tenement House Department and had corrections made.

Health meetings and food conservation meetings have been held in various districts throughout the city to which people came in large numbers.

We are planning to observe in a very large way Negro Health Week during the week of April 21-27. In this we ask the co-operation of all our people especially the pastors in Essex County.

We shall have also in co-operation with the Department of Child Hygiene, a baby show in June at which one of the Insurance will give prizes.

#### Co-Operation.

The co-operation we have received from Municipal and private

organizations throughout the Community has been very encouraging. This point alone it seems to me, proves very clearly how we are of two races and are working co-operatively together. We have co-operated with the State Tenement House Department, Department of Health, " Labor, Board of Education, Bureau of Associated Charities, Children's Aid Society, New Jersey Sunday School Supt. Assn. Silent Protest Parade Wilberforce Social Club, N. J. Federation of Colored Women Club, Female Charitable Society, Central Employment Agency, Legal Aid Society, N.Y. & N. J. Employment Agency, New York Y.W.C.A. The North Jersey Medical Society, The City-Wide Community Boys' Work.

Cases.

While we have had no case worker some very successful work has been done in dealing with families and individuals. Our cases have embraced every phase of human ill and maladjustment. I must refer again to the particularly good and unselfish work done by that group of women, our friendly visitors who gave us courage and made what we were trying to do seem worth while at moments when it otherwise would not have appeared. It is safe to say that more than a thousand persons have been touched directly by these women.

Our organization has been used as a clearing house for information on Negroes in this section.

The Prudential Insurance Co., the Metropolitan Co., The Department of Hygiene in the War Department, The Methodist Episcopal Board of Home Missions., U.S. Government Statisticians have sought information from us.

It is impossible in submitting this report to go into details of our work. There have been months during the winter when as many as 250 people came to our office for various reasons. Certainly thousands have felt the League's influence. Like other organizations, which must maintain themselves by voluntary contributions, we have emerged from desperately hard winter.

The fact that we got thru up to the present time without deficit is in itself a feature. If however, we exist further we must be sufficient financial response to guarantee the Secretary's and assistant's that our services are worth the effort we are making to carry on a very necessary work in this community.

I believe it a very mild criticism to say that while we have

received the help and co-operation of some of our Executive members others have been wilfully neglectful. It is the wish of the organization too, that the whole Community see that the negroes are here, and industry alone, if nothing else is going to hold them here. The difficulties are not going to become less, but, rather more involved and it is only by giving proper support to the League and the things for which it stands will the Community be able to reduce what is certain to become otherwise a more and more grave situation.

It is our belief that a guaranteed budget of \$3500 would enlarge our quarters and give us a working force which would enable us to prosecute our work successfully and we ask urgently that this matter be given definite consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

(Signed) William M. Ashby,

Executive Secretary